

## First case study workshop

02.04.2014

Guidelines and preparation

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## Workshop schedule

- We 2.04: First case study workshop: Guidelines for case study development and on paper writing (discuss possible topics for case study)
- Fri 4.04: Second case study workshop: Presenting your project/Preliminary findings(if any)
- We 9.04: Third case study workshop: On preliminary findings and paper writing

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## Paper requirement: Case study

- Conduct a case study
- Participate in workshops: present and discuss your case study work in progress- from problem formulation to results from data collection.
- Submit a written report of the case study. Deadline: 16.05, 2014.
- Main learning objective:
  - Obtain experience with practical application of theory and method drawn from environmental psychology
  - Opportunity to apply knowledge and skills acquired during course and previously.
- Supervision will be given during workshops, on appointment during the duration of the course and later to a limited extent via e-mail.
- The case study is conducted in research teams of two or three students
- The theme of the paper is chosen and developed by students themselves but must be approved by the supervisor no later than Friday 4.04 after class.

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### More specifically, the case study must include the following:

- **Description of the setting** on the basis of observation.
- Identification of a **problem** in the relations between the persons and the physical setting
- Development of a **hypothesis** about why the problem is occurring.
- Extrapolate from the hypothesis what the underlying, more general **theory** is.
- Propose **solutions** to the problem.
- Collection of some **data** to document the identified problem. The data should actually be written down and put in an Appendix to the report.
- To fulfill the requirement, students must:
  - Participate in the case study workshops including oral presentation of the chosen case study before and after data collection. All students must participate actively in the presentations.

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### What is a Case study?

- “Within psychology a case study refers to the **in-depth study of a particular situation** rather than a general statistical analysis. It is a method to narrow down a very broad topic of research into one single case, i.e., a **person, setting, situation or event**. For example, the broad topic of **urban environmental quality** may be studied in **one particular neighborhood where the municipality has recently installed garbage bins to combat littering**. Rather than employing a strict protocol and close-ended questions to study a limited number of variables, case study methods involve an **exploratory, qualitative examination of a single situation or event: a case**. Qualitative research uses words or other non-numerical indicators (such as images or drawings) as data. The **main purpose** of case studies and other types of qualitative research is to **explore and understand the meaning that individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human phenomenon**. In a case study, **people or events are studied in their own context, within naturally occurring settings, such as the home, play fields, the university and the street**. These settings are “open systems” where conditions are continuously affected by interactions with the social, physical, historical and cultural context to give rise to process of ongoing change.”
- (Steg, van den berg, and De Groot, 2012, pp 9-10)

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### Case studies

- Focus: Situation, individuals, group, organisation etc
- Definisjon:
  - Case study is a **strategy** for doing **research** which involves an **empirical** investigation of a **particular** contemporary **phenomenon within its real life context** using **multiple sources of evidence** (Yin, 1981; 1994)

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### Case studies

- Well established research strategy
- Study of one or more special cases/instances for their own sake
- Emphasis on context
- May use both quantitative and qualitative methods

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### Types of case studies

- **Individual case studies**
  - Detailed description of one single person
  - Focus on an individual phenomenon (for example, substance abuse) and causes, context, evaluations, beliefs, attitudes, experiences
  - Exploratory
- **A set of individual case studies**
  - Study of persons sharing some characteristics
- **Study of one or more local communities**
  - Look at patterns and relations in local community life
- **Study of a social group**
  - Families, professions
- **Study organisations and institutions**
  - Firms, work places, schools, trade unions etc
- **Studies of events, roles, relations av hendelser**
  - Eks: doctor-patient, natural disasters, role conflicts ...

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### Holistic case studies

- When your focus is the global level, for example, the person

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## Multiple case studies

- The equivalent of conducting several experiments
- Analytical generalisation
  - Further development of theory from a preceding case study

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## Planning a case study

- Overview
  - Background information: context, perspective, why, theme
- Procedures
  - Accessibility
  - Resources
  - Planning the data collection
  - Time frame
- Questions
- Report
  - Disposition
  - Data analysis
  - Audience

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## Formulating the case study: Subject, theme and problem formulation

- Subject: This is for example the course you are enrolled in (environmental psychology)
- A subject is divided into a large number of themes. Some of them are only covered in the readings, whereas others are also lectured upon. A theme may be divided into subthemes
- A **problem formulation** is identical with a research question. It may be formulated as a question but it does not have to!

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### Problem formulation

- A university or college paper is based upon a **Problem formulation: This is the research question you are supposed to examine in your case study and in the paper.**
- The process of identifying a good problem formulation may at first seem difficult. A couple of techniques that may be helpful are:
  - Brainstorming
  - Using a mind map

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### Brainstorming

- Write down possible themes. The theme you choose should be:
  - Interesting
  - A theme you already know something about

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### Working with a theme using a mind map

- Using a mind map implies dividing a theme into several subthemes which in turn are divided into a new set of subthemes.
- A mind map may also uncover interesting connections among subthemes.

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## The problem formulation

- Problem formulations are the questions you ask and try to answer through data collection and study of the literature. These questions must be described and discussed in the paper. The problem formulation is in most cases a question about relations among concepts or, in empirical studies, variables.
- After having worked with your paper for a while you will probably discover aspects you did not think about at the start. That is why you should be ready to revise your problem formulation!

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## What we must do today:

- In class: Divide the class into research teams of two or three students. Everybody must join a team!
- Once teams are formed today: Work on the following as far as you get during class, and complete afterwards:
  - Each team identify a public space which contains people, one research team to a setting. The team then goes on to develop a case study for the chosen setting.
  - Formulate a research question focusing on the particular relations between people and environment in the chosen setting
  - Choose at least one method for data collection in the setting (observations, interviews, questionnaire etc).

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